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The CHRIST of TO-DAY
WHAT? WHENCE? WHITHER?

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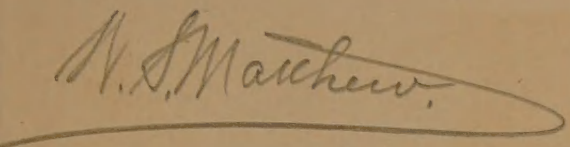

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The Christ of To-Day

What? Whence? Whither?

By

G. CAMPBELL MORGAN

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The Christ of To-day: What? Whence? Whither?

THE Christian religion is pre-eminently the religion of a Person. Other religious systems have had their origin in the thought and teaching of persons, but in process of time have become independent of them. Christianity has never become, nor can it become, independent of the Person of Jesus the Christ. Buddhism is not dependent upon the personality of Buddha. Confucianism, while hardly a religion, being rather a system of ethical teaching, is no longer dependent upon Confucius. In each case the system has become independent of the person

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from whom it sprang. This can never be the case with Christianity. It began with Christ. It has continued through Him. It must stand or fall with Him.

The local churches of Jesus Christ scattered through the cities and villages of the world have not been merely Christ societies, in the sense in which societies have been formed around other of the world's teachers, to study their teaching, and conform the habits of the life thereto. Neither has the whole Catholic Church of Christ ever been merely a federation of such societies. In some deeper sense, not now to be discussed, all Christ societies and the whole Christian society have been constituted of companies of men and women attached in individual and immediate loyalty to the

Person of Christ. The Christian religion is infinitely more than the acceptance of an ethic and an ideal. Men and women through all the centuries, and of all classes have by personal attachment to Christ, been transformed into His likeness, and thus the Christian Church has been created, and the Christian religion established.

The New Testament is preëminently the Book of a Person. The Gospels constitute the story of His presence in human history. The book of the Acts of the Apostles records the beginnings of His spiritual presence among men, revolutionizing ideals, changing character, and starting in the race those streams of living influence which have transformed it in the passing of the centuries. The Epistles contain the great doctrines of the

Catholic Church, which are all unfoldings of truth concerning the Person and the work of Christ. The Apocalypse is prophetic of the final unveiling of Jesus Christ. Thus the whole book is centralized in a Person.

Again, the Person of the Book and the Person of Christianity in the centuries are identical. For the sake of comprehensiveness and brevity, that one Person may be described as of virgin birth, of virtuous life, of vicarious dying, of victorious resurrection. I do not at this stage affirm that these things are true, but only that the New Testament declares them to be so; and moreover, that the Christian fact in the world, in its progress and triumph has been due to continuous belief in the truth of the Book. To deny

the virgin birth of Jesus it is necessary to question the accuracy of the Gospel stories. To deny the virtuous nature of His life, is to falsify the whole scheme of the fourfold narrative. To deny the vicarious nature of His dying is to refuse to believe the account of Christ's own view thereof, and moreover to affirm that the apostolic writings are false in interpretation. Finally, to deny the victorious resurrection is to declare the last facts of New Testament history to be unreliable, and thus to affirm the declaration which was the foundation of apostolic preaching to be untrue.

Thus to lose the Christ of virgin birth, and virtuous life, and vicarious death, and victorious resurrection, is to lose the New Testament. And the reverse is true. To lose the New Tes-

tament is to lose that Person. The Christ of Christianity and the Christ of the New Testament are one.

This position is challenged to-day. The accuracy of the New Testament is being questioned in all these particulars, save that of the virtuous character of the life of Jesus. So far as I am aware, no one has denied the actual historicity of Jesus. There are those however who deny that He was such a Person as is described in the New Testament writings. It is affirmed that these stories, very beautiful, very pathetic, full of tragedy, matchless in many respects, are nevertheless not accurate accounts of the Man Jesus. It is admitted that twenty centuries ago a Man lived and taught and died in Palestine, a Man whose name perhaps was Jesus; that such a Man

gathered around Himself a group of disciples, who came to love Him until love merged into worship. Concerning Him some of their number wrote certain stories which others elaborated, and thus gradually the historic Person became surrounded with traditions, and thus finally the Gospel stories took their present form.

It is therefore declared to be necessary, if the truth concerning this Man Jesus of history is to be known, that He should be reconstructed from the experience of to-day. The records are not to be the test of experience; but on the contrary, experience must be the test of the records. If we ask, Whose experience, we are told, that the common Christian consciousness is intended. At once the difficulty, not to say absurdity of the position is

revealed. Who is to define this common consciousness? However honest the attempt to discover it may be, it is almost certain that the convictions of the one attempting will colour the conclusion arrived at. And yet it is such an attempt I propose now to make, for I believe that if it be possible fairly to state what is the universal experience of the hour of Christ, we shall find that it sets its seal upon the truth of the New Testament writings. The true experience of Christ exists as the result of conviction of the truth of the conception of the Christ set forth in the New Testament.

I propose to ask three questions: the Christ of to-day, What? The Christ of to-day, Whence? The Christ of to-day, Whither?

First, then, the Christ of to-day, What? Here we must be most careful to define the meaning of our question, and our terms. I ask what are the undisputed facts about Christ in the consciousness of the present hour. I do not ask what are indisputable facts. There is a distinction and a difference between the questions. If I ask what are the indisputable facts, I should at once give an answer to which all would not agree. I should at once name those I have mentioned, the facts of the record; while as we have already said, some of these are denied by those who still claim to believe in Christ, and to be loyal to Him. Are there then facts which are undisputed, not only in the Church, but outside its borders? In view of popular and prevalent unbelief in the

virgin birth, the vicarious death, and the victorious resurrection of Jesus, is there a residuum of certainty, which is not open to question?

I submit that there are four facts concerning Christ which cannot be disputed by any person of intelligence and honesty. They are facts of the hour, embedded in the consciousness of enlightened people. Let me first state them in order.

Christ is the Revealer of the highest type of human life.

Christ is the Redeemer of all types of human failure.

Christ is Ruler over the most remarkable empire that man has ever seen.

Christ is demonstrated the Restorer of lost order, wherever He is obeyed.

It is at once seen that I am attempt-

ing to discuss the question of the Christ of to-day not from the standpoint of the Bible teacher, nor from that of the theologian, but rather from that of a man of the time, conscious of the intellectual convictions thereof.

First then, I submit that the age recognizes that Whoever Christ may be, and from whencesoever He has come, it is at least certain that the ideal of human life associated with His name is the highest and the noblest the world has seen. I do not propose to call witnesses to the accuracy of that declaration from within the Church, neither from her theological halls, nor from the rank and file of her membership, and this for the simple reason that such witnesses would at once be declared to be prejudiced. In that most remark-

able article on the Gospels in the "Encyclopædia Biblica," by Professor Schmiedel, which article by the way is the reductio ad absurdum of the whole critical method, he has agreed to at least five sayings of Jesus as genuine. They are all such as he chooses to interpret as casting discredit upon the popular views concerning Christ. I am not now discussing the professor's position, and have only referred to it that I may say that one principle upon which he has come to his conclusion is that the testimony of no man to any historic personage, can be taken if this man had in his attitude towards the person anything of worship. Seeing then that from within the Church of Jesus Christ no testimony can be given by any save those who are worshippers,

I make my appeal to such as are without. And at once I declare that no man of scholarship, combined with simple honesty, has ever yet taken up a study of the Person of Christ, and the Christian ideal with the intention of criticising, but that he has ended by crowning Him in greater or less degree. I do not of course mean to affirm that every man who has thus come to a study of the Person of Jesus has at last accepted as true all that we believe concerning Him; but rather that all honest investigation has issued in recognition of the beauty of the human ideal, associated with the name of Jesus.

Two illustrations will suffice. I presume that it will be readily conceded that there have been no more brilliant critics of Jesus than the

German, Strauss, and the Frenchman, Renan. Any one who has read the "Leben Jesu" of the former, and the "Vie de Jesu" of the latter, will admit that in each case great intellectual brilliance and perfect honesty were employed in an attempt to account for Jesus of Nazareth. Neither of these men were prepared when they wrote, or ever, so far as I know, to accept as true those supernatural things concerning Jesus which I, for instance, hold to be of the essence of truth concerning Him. But in certain senses both these men crowned Him. Strauss in effect affirms that the Man Jesus as described in the Gospels never really lived. He does not deny a historic basis in a Person around whom these Gospel stories have gathered, but he insists that the ideal presented

is so perfect as not to be possible of realization. The beautiful blossom as described cannot have come from the tree of humanity.

Now I am not proposing to debate the question. I do however say in passing that in view of such a criticism, I am driven to declare that if such a Man as the One portrayed never really lived, I am eager to find the person who imagined Him, and if I can find him, he shall be my master. Strauss readily concedes that for which I am now arguing, the perfection of the ideal of human life as presented by the Christ.

Renan's "Vie de Jesu" is without question a superb portraiture of the beauty of the human ideal. Indeed I am personally inclined to think that notwithstanding Renan's criti-

cism of the supernatural statements concerning Christ, he has contributed something of value to the thinking of the present age, in that he has helped to redeem the rare and radiant humanity of the Man of Nazareth from the obscurity into which it had been flung by medieval theology. This much at least is true, it is impossible to read the book of the brilliant Frenchman without feeling that in this case again, a critic has placed his wreath of admiration upon the brow of Christ.

Some years ago a most intelligent and interesting man, calling himself a free thinker, said to me, "I cannot be a Christian because of the unreasonableness of Jesus Christ." When I asked him to explain himself, he said, "The system of Christ's teach-

ing is absolutely impracticable, and therefore utterly unreasonable." I pressed him to give me an illustration, and he replied, "Confucius said to his followers, 'Be just to your enemies.' Your Christ is reported to have said, 'Love your enemies.' Confucius is reasonable; I can be just to my enemies. Christ is unreasonable, for I cannot love them." I replied, "Supposing for the sake of argument, that all men could be brought to love their enemies, would it not be a good thing?" And he immediately replied, "Of course if such a thing could be, every problem of society would be solved, and strife would cease." Thus my friend criticising what he was pleased to speak of as the impracticability of Christ, crowned Him as presenting a perfect ideal,

when he admitted that if it could be obeyed, the best results would follow.

Let me turn however from this method of approaching my first affirmation. There is gradually emerging into the consciousness of our age, a great ideal of humanity. We are coming to believe that the truly great man is he who in his own personality combines the consciousness of the eternal with that of the temporal, who is at the same moment both simple and sublime, both submissive and regnant, both holy and happy. Old ideals of greatness are passing away in the presence of the emergence of this new one in the consciousness of the race. In time past the man of material masterfulness was thought to be great. In certain

times and places the man who turned from all material things, debasing his flesh in an attempt to cultivate the spiritual, was considered great. Today everywhere men are recognizing that each of these is a hemisphere. The truly great man is now recognized as the one in whom each is found in balanced proportion. The world is coming to recognize that not the voluptuary who buries himself in material things, nor the ascetic who attempts to strengthen spirituality by the destruction of the material, presents the true ideal; but rather the man who is at home on earth, while yet conscious of the infinite spaciousness of the things around, the man who living here and now in familiarity with all the details of his own age, nevertheless touches all the

things of to-day in the consciousness of infinite issues.

Where did the world obtain this ideal? It is neither Roman nor Greek, and moreover, it is not Anglo-Saxon. It came into the thinking of men with the coming of the Man Jesus. It has taken possession of the consciousness of the age as the result of His teaching and His power. In the four Gospels I find Him; a Man loving flowers and birds, the sea and the mountains, and all Nature; a Man loving children, and angry when dignified disciples attempted to prevent their approach; a Man equally able to participate in the merriment of the wedding or the sadness of the funeral; and yet a Man Who touched everything of the present life in such a way that the greatest commonplaces flamed

with the glory which had never before been revealed. To this seeing Man, flowers wore the garments of beauty, but His Father clothed them. To His sensitive soul the death of the sparrow was a part of the sorrow of the world, but He knew that not one such fell without His Father. For Him children playing upon the seashore were objects of interest and love, but He knew how their angels did ever behold the face of the Father. It was this Man Who inspired a woman heart to sing,

"Nothing's small!
No lily-muffled hum of a summer-bee,
But finds some coupling with the spinning stars;
No pebble at your foot, but proves a sphere;
No chaffinch, but implies the cherubim;

* * * * * *

Earth's crammed with heaven,
And every common bush afire with God ;
But only he who sees, takes off his shoes —
The rest sit round it, and pluck blackberries."

This ideal of the greatness of the man in whom the sense of the eternal dominates and glorifies that of the temporal, is the Christian ideal.

Again, the age is recognizing the beauty of coincidence in the consciousness, of simplicity and sublimity. The simple life is coming to be recognized sublime. Complexity and overwhelming luxury, in spite of themselves, men are recognizing as vulgar. And this also is the Christ ideal. He was a homeless Man, the Man of one robe, the Man Who lived through the years of public ministry on the sweet charity of wealthy women, perfectly simple, no dilettante child of luxury

was He, pampered and spoiled and fretful, but a sublimely simple soul, able to lay His head at night upon the side of the lone mountain and sleep, able to put His head upon a pillow in the hinder part of a ship, a fisherman's common smack, and sleep, rocked by the rolling waves. Yet He was a soul so sublime, that He turned the mountain into a sanctuary until His communion made it flame with the glory of transfiguration. So sweetly simple was the Christ as to utter words which children for nineteen centuries have learned and loved, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." And yet so sublime in His thinking as to preface the simple love call by a claim and a challenge which still astonish thinking men,

"No one knoweth the Son save the Father; neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him." This ideal the world is coming to accept as beautiful, even though it is not yet ready to obey. We no longer think of a man as necessarily great because wrapped about in mystery, and unapproachable by ordinary mortals. The great man to-day is he to whom the lowliest and the simplest approach with perfect freedom, who yet is able so to speak, and so to act as to mould the destinies of nations, and lead the thinking of an age; and the honest intelligence of our time bows its head in the presence of the Christian ideal and acknowledges its beauty. Whatever may be uncertain about Christ, it must at least be con-

ceded that He has revealed to men the highest ideal of human life which the world has ever seen.

Christ is also the Redeemer of every type of depraved life. Whatever view may be held of His Person, or of the doctrines of the Church concerning Him, it is impossible to deny His ability to redeem every form of failure. To travel through the length and breadth of any land where this evangel has been preached is to find in cities, hamlets, villages, men and women who, by their changed lives, testify to this fact. The last decades of the past century were very largely influenced by the teachings of the physical scientists, such as Darwin and Huxley, Tyndall and Spencer. Their hypotheses and consequent conceptions produced a philosophy which

may be bluntly expressed as that of the survival of the fittest. The phrase has become current in the conversation even of the man in the street. This man finds that it describes accurately certain facts of life, and he therefore acts upon its suggestion. This philosophy obtains not merely in the physical realm, but also in the moral. In the race of life, especially in this keen competitive age, it is the fit man who survives. It is so in the business world. It is so in professional life. The corrupt man does not survive long anywhere. His ascent may be rapid, but so is that of a rocket! To survive to-day a man must be fit. And yet is there a more cruel, a more awful conception of life than this? In the early part of 1903, when I was attending the Congrega-

tional Council Meetings of the West Coast of America, at one of the sessions, Dr. Amory Bradford, whom no one will think of as a man of narrow views, made a very striking statement. He declared that much was being said concerning the brutality of Jonathan Edwards' theology, and while affirming that there were many aspects of that theology with which he was not in sympathy, he emphatically stated that he would rather be a guilty sinner in the hands of an angry God, of Jonathan Edwards' description, than a guilty sinner living simply within the law of the survival of the fittest. With that choice of Dr. Bradford's I am in hearty accord. There is nothing more irrevocable than this law of the survival of the fittest. It has in it no gleam of hope, no touch

of pity, no sigh of regret. In the presence of it, to know unfitness is to be filled with despair. If that philosophy were all that had come into the new century, despair must have settled upon vast multitudes of men, suicides would have multiplied, and hope would have existed for a very small minority of men, perhaps finally for none. Thank God that with the dawning of the century there came side by side with this doctrine of the survival of the fittest the continuing and ever deepening consciousness of the Christ, and that consciousness is the one light upon the human pathway which saves men from despair, the one song of hope which announces the possibility of deliverance. Men everywhere know that the Christ is speaking, and that He is saying in

effect, Yes it is true, that by the working of law only the fit survive, but I am come for the salvation of the unfit. Take hold of the man who by reason of his unfitness cannot survive. Fling him out of your enterprises, spurn him from your society, and Christ says: That is the man I am after. "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. The Son of man is come to seek and save that which was lost." This is no mere poetic dream untried in the hard stern facts of actual life. There is no type of failure that He has not taken hold of and remade. The man most vulgarized, He ennobles; most materialized, He admits into the consciousness of the spiritual; most enslaved by lust and passion, He gives to know that He is able, as Whittier sings, to

"Breathe through the pulses of desire
His coolness and His balm,"

or as the more fiery poetry of the Methodist expresses it,

"To break the power of cancelled sin,
And set the prisoner free."

Jesus Christ, Whoever He is, from wherever He came, wherever He is going, is a living Force in our own age, remaking every type of depraved humanity. He does not contradict the truth of the philosophy of the survival of the fittest, nor does He ask that the unfit shall survive. He rather takes hold upon the unfit, and makes them fit. Account for it how you will, the fact remains, and the age knows it.

And yet once again, Christ is today, Ruler of the most wonderful empire the world has ever seen. We are

living in a day when criticism of the Church is one of the most popular pastimes of some inside its borders. I am intensely weary of this whole business. It seems as though some teachers, preachers, and writers think the only thing worth doing is to abuse the Church. We are being constantly told in speech and pamphlet and conversation that the Church is to get back to apostolic times. If there is one thing for which I pray most earnestly it is that God will never allow His Church to backslide to apostolic times. Apostolic purposes and ideals and power, surely yes; but the times, nay verily! not even the times of the Church in its life and practice. I know full well that if the Church had been true to her Lord's commission, the whole

world would long ago have heard the evangel. If we are going to compare the Church as she is with the Church as she should be, then there is room for complaint, and room for what is far more valuable than complaint, for humility and shame and confession and prayer. But if you are going to compare the Church as she is, with the Church as she was, I unhesitatingly declare that she has made a great advance. I have personally encountered some very peculiar specimens of Church life, but honestly I have never touched anything which for corruption compares with the condition of affairs at Corinth. It may be said that it is not fair to take the Corinthian church as illustrative of the apostolic times. I can only reply that

it existed in apostolic times, and under apostolic teaching. But go still further back to the mother church at Jerusalem, and it will be found how sad her failure was. So complete was the failure to fulfill the Lord's commission to evangelize, that God had to move His base of operations from Jerusalem to Antioch. But all this is beside the mark of the present argument. We are not called upon to compare the Church as she is, with what she should be, or as she is with what she was; but rather the Church as she is to-day with any empire, apart from her, which the world has ever seen. There is nothing in past or present history to compare with the rule of Jesus over His own. It is a great empire, maintained simply upon the principle of love and

loyalty to the King. The service of the Church is of the highest type of heroism. You tell me of the heroism of the soldier, and I will not venture to criticise that which I can have no share in. I grant you there is a certain kind of heroism in facing death upon the battle-field, but after all it depends upon the thunder of the battle, and the clash of arms, and the beating of drums, and is wholly animal. Such heroism is as nothing compared to that of the girl who turns her back upon her father's home of ease and comfort, and sets her face towards the far distant place which is the habitation of cruelty; and goes forth to spend the days of her radiant womanhood in quiet persistent sacrificial endeavour to lead a despised and broken people into light. You may tell me of the

greatness and the heroism of statesmen, and I thank God for all great statesmanship; but come with me in imagination, and I will show you a picture common, thank God, to-day in all our cities. To see it, you must accompany me to slum-land. There amid the squalor and the vice is a frail girl, wearing perhaps a Salvation Army bonnet. There she lives, there she toils, there she suffers, and there she conquers. And now let the masters of nations, and the makers of empires find me any heroism which compares with it. And there is a perpetual heroism manifest, which has not even the glamour of the missionary and the slum-sister. In a house in the suburb of the city, in circumstances of comfort as to material things, you may find a woman

suffering daily from a refined brutality on the part of the man she calls husband. Yet in spite of all, she waits and watches and prays and passionately desires to win him for Christ. Presently she dies, perchance of a broken heart. If she would but have turned her back upon her Master, her path might have been flowery according to the thinking of worldly men. Do you tell me that is an isolated case? I would God I could believe it were. Such women are to be found everywhere.

These are but passing illustrations, taken almost at haphazard. Jesus rules over this great Kingdom of the saints, who notwithstanding all their faults and failures, their blemishes and their mistakes, their incompetence, and alas, too often, their infidelity, are

yet coming up out of the wilderness, led onward by their Lord to the final goal, while line after line of the grace and beauty of His own character are being wrought out in them, while tribulation's fire purges them to perfection. The age knows well, notwithstanding all its small criticism of the inconsistency of individual Christians, that the Church stands, a shining light, revealing to the world the possibility of highest heroism in all such as are loyal to the King. Human history affords no parallel in glory and strength of empire.

And finally Christ is the Restorer of a lost order where He is obeyed. This is demonstrated in history, and known to be so in the deepest consciousness of our age. I will not stay to speak of His restoration of order in

the case of the individual, having dealt with it already in speaking of Him as Redeemer. Neither will I stay to argue for the fact that He restores order in the family, for this also is self-evident. I do pause, however, for a moment to affirm that He restores civic and national order, wherever He is obeyed. For illustration let us pass back over three centuries to Italy, and therein to Florence, not as we find her to-day, but in chains, under the domination of the Medici. Suddenly a voice is heard, uncultured and objectionable to the ears of certain of the Florentines. It is the voice of a Lombard monk, uttering the message of truth, with the accent of Lombardy. At first Florence is offended. This we may understand when we remember the false culture which made Car-

dinal Bembo warn his clergy against reading the epistles of St. Paul because the style was likely to degrade them. But the accident of an accent is never sufficient to prevent the triumph of a truth. Savonarola preached until the vast Duomo was packed with the masses of the people. Florence heard, believed, and obeyed. For once the voice of Christ directed the civic courts. The power of the Medici was broken, and the people emerged from thraldom into a brief period of liberty. It did not last, I know it; and presently will deal with the reason. In the meantime you tell me that is old history, and ask, Is there nothing in more recent times? A few years ago a minister of Jesus Christ became burdened with a sense of the corruption of the city in the midst of which he

preached. He did not make the mistake that many men have done, of uttering in the pulpit promiscuous generalities. He gathered his facts, he filed his affidavits, and then passed into his pulpit and thundered against the corruption of the city, backing his public utterance by the carefully accumulated testimony. We know the result. For the moment Tammany was swept out, and Charles Parkhurst uttering the will of Christ, cleansed New York, and gave it the opportunity of purity. Again you remind me that Tammany came back again into power, and New York as well as Florence relapsed. It is, alas, too true, and the reason is to be found in the fact that the Church of God has never yet fully realized that the price of liberty is eternal vigilance. To take the later

case, when the Church had won her victory, she went to sleep. Ceasing her watchfulness, she closed her churches for three months because the weather was hot. The devil never takes vacation in the mountains, and all the failure was due to the fact that men failed in their obedience to the voice of Christ. We come back thus to my original statement, that where Christ is heard and obeyed, first by His people in the delivery of a message, and then by the outsiders in obedience thereto, He always restores lost order. There is no unclean municipality which might not be made pure within twelve months if the Church would enforce and the city would obey the orders of the Christ.

These facts concerning Christ are not merely indisputable, they are

undisputed. There is to be found no man of intelligence, or woman either, who denies the glory of His ideal, His ability to redeem, the marvel of His rule, or the certainty of His power to restore. There may be many differences of opinion concerning the mystery of His Person, the method of His power; but the things for which I have argued are beyond dispute.

So far I have only dealt with my first question. Let me now briefly turn to my second. The Christ of to-day is the Revealer of an ideal, the Redeemer of failure, Ruler over an empire, Restorer of order. Where did He come from? If this is the Christ of to-day, He is not the product of to-day. I go back into the past century, and find Him there. If we had time, it would be interesting to pass

back through the centuries, ever asking as we enter each, Is the Christ here, and whence came He? Seeing that this is not possible, let us leap the distances by half millenniums. We go back first then to the dawning of the sixteenth century. There we find darkness prevalent, but light is breaking. A German monk has found the Bible and is reading it. Fifty years prior to the finding of that Bible Caxton had invented the printing-press. The time of the invention was surely by Divine arrangement, for presently the Bible of the monk must be circulated. In whatsoever direction we look at this time, we find this prevalent darkness, but everywhere also there are gleams of light which speak of daybreak. For a hundred years they have been shin-

ing with more or less constancy and brilliancy in England. They are upspringing among the Swiss mountains, and now are breaking in and from the soul of Luther.

With that general impression on the mind, we pass back another half millennium to the year 1000, and find the darkness even deeper. There seems to be hardly a ray of light, and yet on closer observation, we find that even here the darkness has not entirely comprehended the light. The first shimmer of the dawn is seen breaking among the Waldensians in the Piedmont valleys.

Once again we go back to the year 500. There is far more light now, but it is shadowed, and the gloom is threatening to thicken. Men are disputing about doctrines. Just before,

a Roman emperor has espoused the cause of Christianity. The Church has passed under the influence of worldly power, and theologians instead of being preachers and prophets and evangelists, are becoming disputants, and are formulating human creeds.

Look once more at these points. Where is the Christ? In the first, almost hidden, but being rediscovered; and the consciousness of Him coming back to the world. In the year 1000 that consciousness is almost lost, and the facts of the Christ of to-day upon which I have laid emphasis, are almost unknown. In the year 500 the Christ is being slowly but surely hidden behind controversies concerning Him; and man's consciousness of Him is becoming less acute because His interpreters are quarrelling about Him.

Take these three points of outlook once more. We begin now at the centre, at the year 1000, well-nigh a millennium ago. As we have said, the Christ consciousness is almost absent, but something else is absent too. The Scriptures are hidden, the people have lost their Bible. I now pass back to the year 500, and what is happening? The Bible is being hidden under books about it. The Truth of God is being obscured by discussions concerning it. The portraiture of Jesus is being veiled in the draperies of human opinion. I come finally to the year 1500, when as we saw, the light is breaking anew. Where is the Bible? It had been found in England a hundred years before, and then had been suppressed. Luther has now found it in his

cell, and Zwingli has been studying it.

On this rapid survey of the centuries I base a proposition. Wherever the Christian consciousness has been lost, it has been because the Scriptures have been hidden. Wherever it has been restored, it has been because these same Scriptures have been rediscovered, and given back to the people. It is sometimes affirmed today that we are now independent of the Bible, because the Christ of experience is firmly established. In answer I declare that history demonstrates the fact that if the Scriptures of Truth be lost, not perhaps in a day, or a decade, but surely and certainly, the Christ consciousness will pass; and notwithstanding all our progress and civilization, we shall

drift back to a barbarism more despairing and devilish than anything the world has ever seen, because it will consist of refinement and education, lacking the stimulus and corrective of the spiritual quantity.

In the year 500 the Scriptures were being hidden. There is no question however about their existence. As for the Old Testament, we know that it has existed in its present form since at least two centuries before Christ; and it is conceded by every one that the New Testament as we have it, was in the hands of the Church in the year 500. But I may be told that there was a time when the Church had no New Testament, and yet the Christ consciousness existed. That is true, but it is also true that the books containing the portrait of Christ, which

are ours to-day, were in possession of the Church before the last of the actual eye-witnesses had passed away. In the "Lives of the Haldanes" by Alexander Haldane, a story is told of a dinner party held at the house of Sir Hugh Abercromby. At that dinner among others there were present Sir David Dalrymple, and Dr. Buchanan. In the course of conversation some one said, "Supposing all the New Testaments in the world had been destroyed at the end of the third century, could their contents have been recovered from the writings of the first three centuries?" About two months later, Dr. Buchanan received an invitation to breakfast with Sir David Dalrymple, a man of great patristic learning, who afterwards became Lord Hailes. During breakfast Lord Hailes

asked the doctor if he recollected the curious question about the possibility of recovering the contents of the New Testament from the writings of the first three centuries; and said, "That question quite accorded with the turn or taste of my antiquarian mind. On returning home, as I knew I had all the writers of those centuries, I began immediately to collect them, that I might set to work on my arduous task as soon as possible." Pointing to a table covered with papers, Lord Hailes said, "There have I been busy for those two months, searching for chapters and half chapters and sentences of the New Testament, and have marked down what I found, and where I found it, so that any person can examine and see for himself. I have actually discovered the whole of

the New Testament with the exception of seven or eleven verses (I forget which), which satisfies me that I could discover them also. Now," said he, "here was a way in which God concealed or hid the treasures of His Word that Julian the apostate emperor, and other enemies of Christ who wished to extirpate the Gospel from the world never would have thought of, and though they had, they never could have effected their destruction."

I only quote this to show that these Scriptures which we say are coincident with the Christ as to revelation and creation of experience, were certainly in the hands of the Church as we have them now, as early as 175, for they are all embodied in the writings of the Fathers prior to that date.

How much further back can I go,

and find the writings? Professor Ramsey, in a recent series of articles on "The letters to the seven churches," in one of the expository magazines, says, "No person who is capable of appreciating the tone and thought of different periods could place the composition of any of the books of the New Testament in the period of the Antonines, unless he were imperfectly informed of the character and spirit of that period." He further says, "The idea and narrative of the birth of Christ could not be a growth of mythology at a later time, even during the period about 60 to 100 A. D., but sprang from the conditions and thoughts, and expressed itself in the words of the period to which it professes to belong." This most recent and most scholarly statement shows

that the Gospel narratives were the work of men who were contemporary with the Christ; and were in the hands of the Church at least by the year A. D. 70. If Christ died in the year A. D. 30, or as some say, in the year A. D. 37, then the stories of His birth, and life, and death, and resurrection were circulated among His followers within forty years of His death.

This may be admitted, and yet the affirmation be made that they are largely imaginative and therefore false. For the moment I confine myself to insisting upon the chain of connection. The experience which men had of Christ in corporeal presence, created a consciousness which they represented upon the pages of the Gospels, and thus created a similar consciousness, in the minds of all

the following centuries. Take that story away, and the consciousness of Christ is lost, as the history of the centuries proves. Restore that story, and the fourfold consciousness is inevitably restored. My deduction therefore is that the Christ of to-day is the Christ of history, and the Christ of history is the Christ of the New Testament writers. If you grant me the Christ Who is Revealer, Redeemer, Ruler, Restorer, I claim that He is the Christ of the virgin birth, the virtuous life, the vicarious dying, the victorious resurrection, and no other. To say that the Christ of the virtuous life, even though He be not a Man of virgin birth, and did not die a vicarious death, and never rose in victorious resurrection, would have wrought the same results, is to

take for granted what cannot be proved.

To return to an objection suggested, that while the age of the stories as we have them, is established, they may yet lack accuracy, I have only to say that if this be true, then the Christ Who is Revealer, Redeemer, Ruler and Restorer, being false, all the victories of the centuries have been won through belief in that which is not true. That is to claim that moral uplift can come out of deception.

I have one other question which may be dealt with in yet briefer time. Whither is this Christ going? I only pause to ask it in order that I may say that there need be in the heart of none of us anything approaching panic. The writer of the letter to the Hebrews declares, "Jesus Christ is the

same yesterday and to-day, yea and forever." If the Christ of to-day is the Christ of yesterday, He will surely be the same "unto the ages." The writer of the letter to the Hebrews however said this also, "We see not yet all things put under His feet," and we have still to say the same thing. The revelation of the ideal is not fully received. The redemption is not fully appropriated. The rule is not actually and implicitly obeyed. The restoration is not perfectly realized. But if this writer said, "We see not yet all things put under His feet," he added "but we see Jesus." The vision of Jesus is the prophecy of the coming victory. My hope for the future is not built on this philosophy or that theory, but on the Christ of to-day, Who is the Christ of yesterday. My

vision of the living Lord assures me that the revelation, though not received as yet, is the pattern of things which are to be realized throughout all human society; that the redemption, though not yet fully appropriated, is the power through which these things are to be accomplished; that the rule, though not yet fully obeyed, is the process by which He will administer the power for the realization of the pattern; that the restoration, though not yet perfectly realized is the glorious prophecy that the day must come when the anthem shall roll around the world, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen, and the kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our God and of His Christ."

Many years ago, in old Carver Street Methodist Chapel in Sheffield, I heard

that matchless prince of preachers, Alexander Maclaren deliver the annual sermon of the Baptist Missionary Society, from the words, "Arise and shine for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." In the course of that sermon he said one of those exquisitely beautiful things which characterized his preaching. "Let no man say because high noon seems long in coming that it will never come. Let us rather say as we wait in the gloom, How glorious will that day be, of which the twilight dawn has lasted nineteen hundred years." That is the language of faith, that is the prophetic utterance of a man who sees Jesus, and knows His victory is sure.

Somewhere about the same time, I stood in the ante-room of the Bir-

mingham Town Hall with the prophet evangelist, William Booth. There came into the ante-room the ubiquitous reporter. After asking a great many questions, which were answered by the leader of the Salvation Army with his accustomed courtesy, through which a vein of sarcastic humour played, the reporter said, "General, do you think Christianity is played out?" The question was asked at the time when a heated controversy was going forward in one of the British papers under the title of "Is Christianity a failure?" and as the result of an attack made upon Christianity by Robert Buchanan. The General with that half snarl which characterizes him, and always has in it the elements of humour and tenderness said, "Played out, it has never been played in yet."

If you will put together that rougher and more biting sarcasm of William Booth, and the poetic tenderness of Alexander Maclaren, you will have the truth in answer to the question Whither goes the Christ of to-day. We will not

"... bate a jot
Of heart or hope; but still bear up and steer
Right onward."

The Christ of to-day cannot be eliminated from history, or from the consciousness of the age, because these Scriptures cannot be broken. By His grace we will follow Him in the train of those who have lived and hoped and suffered and died, not having obtained the promises, and as we follow, we know

"Jesus shall reign where'er the sun
Doth his successive journeys run,
His kingdom stretch from shore to shore,
Till moons shall wax and wane no more."

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